

Chester County Hotel
(Mansion House Hotel)
36 West Market Street (southeast corner
of Market and Church Streets)
West Chester Borough
Chester County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-1112

HABS,
PA,
15-WCHES,
17-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. PA-1112

CHESTER COUNTY HOTEL

(Mansion House Hotel)

Location: 36 West Market Street (southeast corner of Market and Church Streets), West Chester Borough, Chester County, Pennsylvania.

Present Owner: Vernon T. Mercer and Burnett H. Wilson,
36 West Market Street, West Chester, Pennsylvania.

Present Use: Hotel (demolished circa 1972).

Statement of Significance: This hotel was designed for William Everhart by William Strickland in 1832. Built as a temperance house, it was changed to a licensed hotel soon after, serving as a summer resort for Philadelphians and other city dwellers. The structure has been greatly altered.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: William Everhart 1829-1836; Frederick Holman 1836-1844; Levi K. Brown 1844-1849; Joseph P. McClellan 1849-1850; Pierce and Marshall 1850-1854; R. Coleman Hemphill 1854-1861; John McGinley 1861-1862; Nathan T. Hayes 1862-1887; Ellis P. Newlin 1887-1891; John A. Hannum 1891-1897; John T. Twaddell 1897-1899; O. F. Groff 1899-1902; Susanna Millhizer 1902-1944; Vernon T. Mercer et al. 1944 to date.
2. Date of erection: 1832 by William Everhart.
3. Architect: William Strickland.
4. Original plans, construction: The original plans are unknown, and there have been many remodelings. From the 1856 and 1879 views listed under Item 6 of this section and from the descriptions in various advertisements, some idea may be formed of the hotel's early design. On the first floor little seems to remain of the original layout, but on the upper sleeping floors, fewer changes have been made.

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5. Alterations and additons: The structure has been altered and remodeled several times. In 1856 a second-floor veranda was added across the north (front) elevation; this was later removed. The first story was altered in 1871 and a new north front is mentioned in 1880. The mansard roof with bays and dormers was added on the west section in 1900. There were further alterations in the early 1960s and the structure was demolished circa 1972.

6. Important old views and references:

Views: Cut on "Map of the Borough Westchester Chester Co. Pa. Survey & Drawn by Martin & Kennedy." 1856 Daily Graphic, New York, New York, for November 3, 1879. (Copies of both in the Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, Pennsylvania, along with many other views of a later date.)

References: Sources of information all to be found in the Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, Pennsylvania, unless otherwise noted. Classified printed and manuscript files in Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, Pennsylvania, under heading West Chester, Business Houses - MANSION HOUSE. J. Smith Futhey and Gilbert Cope, History of Chester County, Pennsylvania, Louis H. Everts, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 1881.

- B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

The structure was built for William Everhart, a large landowner in the southwest part of town, by architect William Strickland. This was the last of the large hotels to be built in West Chester. It started out as a temperance house, but changed almost immediately to a licensed hotel. The hotel became very popular being located across the street from the Market Street entrance of the County Courthouse. It has been continuously used as a hotel and has been known as the Mansion House Hotel since 1846, but the original name was the Chester County House. Original petitions for its applications to the court and a clippings file of various events are in the Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, Pennsylvania.

- C. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated: None known.

D. Supplemental Material: Direct quotations from the following -

1. "Republican American," West Chester, Pa., September 4, 1832:

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The hotel was designed in 1832 by William Strickland, but has been altered several times.
2. Condition of fabric: Fair.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The hotel extends 68' -6" (seven-bay front) on Market Street and 96' -6" on Church Street; it is three-and-a-half stories with a partially exposed basement.
2. Foundations: Stone.
3. Wall construction: Brick (painted).
4. Chimneys: It is probable that none of the original chimneys remain.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The openings are probably in the original place on north front.
 - b. Windows and shutters: The original openings are mostly in the original place on the bedroom floors, but the original windows are gone.
6. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Mansard roof added to the west part; gable roof on the east part; the whole is covered with tin.

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b. Cornice, eaves: Brick cornice on the east end is original.

c. Dormers: Numerous in the 1900 Mansard roof.

C. Description of Interiors:

1. Floor plans: One portion of the hotel consists of three-and-one-half stories and the other portion of four stories. The bedroom floors remain relatively as built, but the first floor seems to have been entirely rebuilt.
2. Stairways: Not original.
3. Flooring: Some original wooden floors in bedrooms.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster. On the first floor there are ornamental pressed-tin ceilings of square and floral motifs.
5. Doorways and doors: No old doorways or doors on the first floor; some original ones on bedroom floors.
6. Trim: Some original trim remains on upper bedroom floors, but none on first floor.
7. Hardware: Some original remains on upper bedroom floors.
8. Lighting: Modern electricity.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Hotel faces north on Market Street; built flush with the sidewalk on north front and west side. There are other buildings on the east and south sides.
2. Enclosures: None.
3. Outbuildings: "American Republican," West Chester, Pennsylvania, for December 26, 1848, states: "There is also attached to it, extensive Brick Stabling, Carriage House, Ice House, &c., and a beautiful yard planted with ornamental Trees and Shrubbery."

Prepared by Bart Anderson-July 1958
Curator, Chester County
Historical Society